



CRYING FOR THE YOUTH

[BRO.BENSON MUEMA]



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1. SOME OF CHALLENGES FACING CHRISTIAN YOUTH TODAY

As a Gen Z Christian, I often find myself at a crossroads, wrestling with challenges that test the very foundation of my faith more often than I'd like.

Living in this age where trends go in and out faster than ever, the journey is riddled with complexities—from the pervasive influence of secular culture to the constant barrage of social media narratives.

This article is a reflection on the multifaceted challenges I and many others like me, face in today's fast-paced and interconnected world.

1. Secular Culture

The [decline of organized religion](#) leaves many young Christians feeling like a cultural minority.

Peer pressure to conform and the discomfort of expressing faith openly can be significant. In science class, heated debates about evolution versus creationism might arise.

Celebrating Christmas or Easter amidst the secular festivities of winter break or spring vacation can feel isolating. Even basic acts like praying before lunch can attract curious or judgmental stares.

We can look to the enticing world of TikTok as an example, my go-to for quick entertainment. While my FYP (For You Page) might be filled with the occasional Christian content, discernment becomes crucial.

Recently, I've come across content where celebrities claim to be turning back to God. However, the more I watch it, the more I start to question things. And I later on found out that he was using God for the promotion of his upcoming album.

As young believers, we must constantly find ways to reconcile our beliefs with the dominant culture around us, learning to articulate our faith with conviction while respecting diverse perspectives.

2. Social Media Influence

The curated reality presented on social media bombards young minds with unrealistic expectations and relentless pressure.

Negative posts, cyberbullying, and the constant comparison game with seemingly perfect online personas can chip away at self-esteem and create a sense of inadequacy.

Balancing the desire for connection with the dangers of online negativity and the pressure to portray a flawless online image becomes a delicate dance. We must learn to navigate these platforms responsibly, cultivating critical thinking skills to discern truth from hyperbole and finding online communities that uplift and affirm our values.

3. Living in an Anti-Christian Culture

The rise of an anti-Christian culture is dishearteningly apparent, even in unexpected corners of social media.

I stumbled upon a TikTok video featuring someone reading the Bible, initially assuming it was a celebration of Christianity. However, as the video progressed, it became clear that the intention was not to embrace faith but to condemn it. What came as the most shocking part was the fact that there were thousands of comments backing her up.

Navigating these challenges requires resilience, open dialogue, and the ability to articulate our beliefs respectfully, even in the face of opposition. Finding supportive communities and mentors who can guide us through difficult conversations and equip us with the tools to defend our faith with grace and understanding becomes crucial.

4. Technology and Distractions

The constant notifications and demands of the digital world can easily drown out spiritual priorities. Finding time for daily prayer, scripture reading and church attendance amidst the incessant pings and buzzing screens can be difficult.

Juggling deadlines, social media interactions and extracurricular activities can leave little room for spiritual reflection and engagement.

As young Christians, we must cultivate self-discipline to carve out space for our faith life in a technology-saturated world. This could involve setting specific times for prayer and Bible study, utilizing technology-free zones, and finding accountability partners who can help us stay focused on our spiritual goals.

5. Lack of Discipline

While not universal, some pockets of Christian youth culture might struggle with developing and maintaining spiritual habits and disciplines that require intentional effort, a struggle that I, like many Christian youth, grapple with daily. This may manifest in inconsistent devotional practices, neglecting Bible study due to competing priorities, or succumbing to temptations that conflict with our values.

Developing self-discipline through consistent practices like daily prayer and scripture reading, finding accountability within our community, and setting



achievable goals for spiritual growth can empower us to overcome these challenges.

Surrounding ourselves with positive influences and seeking guidance from mentors who uphold the values we wish to cultivate can also provide invaluable support.

6. Sexual Purity Pressures

Navigating the complexities of relationships and sexuality is a major challenge for all young people, and Christian youth face the added pressure of upholding traditional values in a culture often dominated by permissiveness (in which social norms become increasingly liberal).

The constant bombardment of sexualized content through media and peer pressure can create a struggle to resist temptation and live out beliefs in this arena.

Participating in youth groups focused on healthy relationships and responsible choices can provide a safe space for open dialogue and support.

7. Living Out Your Faith

Ultimately, faith is not meant to be confined to Sundays or church services. Integrating our beliefs into daily life, from interactions with friends to academic pursuits, is crucial for young Christians.

Engaging in service projects that benefit the community, participating in youth groups that offer fellowship and opportunities for growth, and finding mentors who can guide us through our faith journey can help translate our beliefs into action. This could involve standing up for what we believe in, even when it's difficult, demonstrating compassion and kindness to others, and using our talents and gifts to serve the community.

8. Mental Health Struggles

Today we face immense pressure to succeed, both academically and socially. This, coupled with the uncertainty of the future and the ever-present comparison game on social media, can contribute to significant mental health challenges like anxiety, depression, and isolation.

While finding solace in our faith, we may still grapple with these struggles. Addressing the unique intersection of faith and mental health, providing access to supportive resources, and fostering open conversations about mental health within the Christian community can be crucial for well-being.

9. Peer Pressure



Navigating peer pressure is a universal challenge, but for young Christians, it adds an extra layer of complexity. Friends might pressure us to participate in activities that conflict with our beliefs, from attending parties with alcohol to engaging in gossip or unkind behavior. Feeling ostracized or excluded for not going along with the crowd can be a powerful force.

We as Christians must develop strong convictions, learn to politely decline unwelcome pressure, and surround ourselves with friends who respect our values. Finding supportive communities, like youth groups or faith-based activities, can provide a safe space for connection and encouragement.

Conclusion

Navigating life's complexities as a young Christian in today's world is no easy feat. While faced with secularised culture, social media pressures, and technological distractions, we hold the potential to be beacons of hope and compassion.

Recognizing and understanding the challenges we encounter, from mental health struggles to peer pressure, is crucial for seeking effective support and guidance.

WHY ARE YOUNG ADULTS LEAVING OUR CHURCHES? (SURVEY RESPONSES)

Is the traditional church model failing our younger generations? The growing trend of Millennial and Gen Z Christians leaving the church is a significant concern.

[The Generations Project](#) delves into the experiences of these young adults, revealing a disconnect between their values, expectations, and the traditional structures they encounter within the Church. This project draws upon 131 in-depth interviews from 63 different churches across 10 denominations, along with approximately 1700 survey respondents across five generations of Christians.

While the current research was based within the Singaporean context, anecdotal indications suggest the insights, particularly those regarding Millennials and Gen Zs, are transferable to other Asian cities with similar demographics, such as Kuala Lumpur, Malaysia.

Diving deeper into the factors driving this shift, this article invites reflection and a deeper understanding of the challenges facing the modern church.

Throughout the article, pastor from [PJEFC](#), offers insights into these challenges from kenyan perspective, drawing on his years of ministry experience.

So, why are young adults leaving our churches?



1. They Feel Like a Cog in the Church Machinery

Many of our younger interviewees expressed their struggle with the often transnational relationships they have with their leaders in church. Their experience in the existing system in many churches was likened to being a mere “cog in the machinery”, with their worth determined by the function they fulfill.

For many of them, serving in ministry looks like being involved in one event after another, and they simply end up as “resources” to achieve a certain goal. This, in their opinion, results in relationships between clergy and laity that tend to be very transactional.

Many feel that they have become “service providers” for their churches and their worth is solely determined by the roles of service that they play in church.

The experience of one interviewee, while not normative, illustrates the struggles faced by both Millennial and Gen Z church members often near the “bottom” of the hierarchy in the church.

In her own words, she lamented: “I felt like a tool being discarded because it was no longer useful.”

Sarah (not her real name) had recently graduated from medical school and was serving her first year in a hospital. The shift work requirements meant she had almost no control over her time on the weekends.

When Sarah approached her worship ministry leader to indicate her need to step back from ministry during this season of life, the only response she got was for her to ensure that someone would take over her duties.

In her own words, she lamented: “*I felt like a tool being discarded because it was no longer useful.*”

They Began Exploring Their Own Faith

Pastor(1): A key turning point in regards to leaving the church is the transition when one goes to university or begins work in a foreign country.

Most of our young adults have been in church through their childhood, teens, and early college years because of the wishes of their parents.

Our young people however do grow up, and many will be making a decision on their faith for the first time in their lives. Some have left to explore other churches, while some naturally drift away from Christianity over time. This happens especially in a foreign land where parents are unable to nag or force their children into joining them for Sunday Service.

They Feel That They're Not Taken Seriously in Church

Many Millennials and Gen Z Christians tend to be second-generation Christians attending churches their parents brought them to.

Older church leaders had literally watched them grow up and this familiarity coupled with the influence of Confucian values in our society, had caused many young adults to express doubt they would ever be taken seriously by the leadership.

Like the generations before them, their experience in the marketplace has a profound influence on how they navigate church life. Older Millennials (now in their late 30s and early 40s) are starting to take on greater responsibilities in middle management roles, but they are often still made to feel that they are still too “green” to influence important decisions in church.

Even for younger Millennials and older Gen Zs, who may still be in the early stages of working life, the predominant worldview is that competency and results are more important than experience (which is often perceived as outdated). This often makes it difficult for them to “**submit**” to their leaders in church when there are differing opinions and hierarchy is the main deciding factor.

They Face Competing Priorities

***Pastor (2):** One reason young people often leave the church is because of their busy lives. Being based in Kenya, the rising cost of living, the weakened economy, and also of the ringgit have resulted in a career-driven focus for young adults.*

Once committed young adults, especially during their university days experience a realignment of priorities.

While some still make it a point to come to church, it is not uncommon to see them withdrawing from small group meetings and serving for a season. Sadly in some cases, the pursuit of material wealth and making a living resulted in some young adults leaving the church entirely.

They Feel That the Church Has Become Irrelevant

over 4,000 Christian leaders from 198 countries gathered, to discuss critical issues of the time relating to the Church and evangelization. This was the Third Lausanne Congress, convening nearly 35 years after the original Lausanne Congress.

Written as a roadmap for the Lausanne Movement, The African Commitment presents a statement of shared Biblical convictions and calls Christians all over the world to action. Within this document, there is an interesting statement: “The falsehood of a ‘**sacred-secular divide**’ has permeated the Church’s thinking and action. This divide tells us that religious activity belongs to God, whereas other activity does not.”

While it may not be fully representative, our research has shown that the older generations, due to very valid formative experiences, tend to perceive church activities as having greater importance than what happens outside the church.

For Millennials and Gen Zs, the sacred-secular divide has become increasingly non-existent. The viewpoint that pastoral or ministry work is “holier” or higher on a hierarchy in the kingdom of God is outdated and even arrogant. With this worldview, many struggle with the perceived myopia of what is spoken about and done in our churches.

Since all work is equally “holy” in theory, the lop-sided emphasis of the church on certain activities (usually church-based) and the lack of engagement with important issues in the world have caused some to see the church as becoming increasingly irrelevant. Thus, the drive and motivation to serve exclusively within the context of the perceived inward-looking church have been dampened for them.

They Seek Community Beyond Formal Settings

PASTOR (3): My church, a congregation of 500 members, holds Sunday services that are often seen as formal, large gatherings.

Some young people tend to shy away from the service as they see it as an intimidating and formal event. Reasons for this include feeling they don't gain much value from attending, or simply that their friends don't go to church often either.

However, it is interesting to note that some of these young people still attend Cell Groups (once or twice a month) and join the other young adults for sports. They also attend special services such as Easter and Christmas.

They Are Uncomfortable With the Perceived “Performance System” in Churches

Millennials and Gen Zs especially value people who are willing to have deep authentic relationships and are ready to journey with them without trying to run their lives. This is certainly influenced by the postmodern culture of these generations which reacts with great skepticism towards those who appear to “know it all” or “have it all together.”

As a result, many feel stifled by what they perceive as attempts from the older generations to preach to them without any effort to understand the context of their lives.

To them, having a culture where key performance indicators (KPIs) are used to determine if Christians are “worthy” will ultimately result in a spirituality that is content only with external behavioral modification and no real internal change.

Furthermore, the behaviors that are “rewarded” and those that are criticized seem to be motivated more by societal norms and expectations rather than Biblical wisdom.

Where Do We Go From Here?

“Every generation takes for granted the good that went before it, reacts against the bad, and responds within its own historical context.” In our research into the five different generations, we have found this statement to be quite true.

Whichever generation we belong to, we are often guilty of reading the other generations through the lens of our own and using the concept of the “generational gap” as an excuse for ignoring the need for understanding and empathy.

Due to the constraints of length in this article, it may appear that I (Wei Hao) am siding with the younger generations. However, this is merely an attempt to present the concerns that were heard without any assessment of their validity.

While there is a need for older generations to understand the younger generations, it is equally important for younger generations to understand what the older generations went through and why they are wired to approach certain issues in particular ways.

In our findings, there is no doubt that all generations are genuinely concerned about the church and have equally valid considerations.

However, with the unprecedented pace at which the world is changing now, it is possible that our churches now comprise different generations of Christians with vastly divergent views and approaches to the practice of the faith who may not even be aware of these differences.

Instead of trying to “solve” a “problem” that we have observed, maybe we need to take a pause and seek to increase our understanding and empathy for one another first.

PASTOR (1): Growing up in church and being in ministry for many years have shown many friends or acquaintances who were once strong in their faith and committed to ministry either slowed down or left the church entirely.

Nevertheless, I believe that it is my role to continue being friends with them not just to see them return to the church, but also that love, and grace applied in an organic process are key ingredients in restoring prodigal sons or daughters who have left the faith.

A personal joy for me is still to see them occasionally outside the walls of the church, or when they come on Easter or Good Friday.

It is always interesting that these young people still consider faith as something that is important to them as my meetings with them occasionally contain discourses about the church, faith, and also clarification about misunderstandings that they have had with Christianity in the past.

My encouragement and exhortation is for us who still have relationships with some of these young people to continue to do so. In my church, we have ministries such as pre-marital counseling, sports, and community services where we can still engage some of these young people to come.

At the end of the day, all we can do is to play our role, and pray and hope that the Great Shepherd will draw back the lost to His fold.

TO BE CONTINUED.....

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KNOWLEDGE IS POWER

YOUTH AND BIBLE

The Bible is filled with great advice to guide and inspire us. Sometimes all we need is a little boost, but often we need much more than that. The word of God is alive and powerful, able to speak into our troubled souls and lift us out of sorrow. Whether you need encouragement for yourself or you wish to encourage someone else, these Bible verses for teens will provide help when you need it most.

Bible Verses for Teens to Encourage Others

Many Bible verses discuss the importance of assisting others and helping them persevere through times of trouble. These are excellent verses for you to share with their friends, especially those who may be struggling with certain challenges.

Galatians 6:9

"Let us not become weary in doing good, for at the proper time, we will reap a harvest if we do not give up."

1 Thessalonians 5:11

"Therefore encourage one another and build one another up, just as you are doing."

Ephesians 4:29

"Don't use foul or abusive language. Let everything you say be good and helpful, so that your words will be an encouragement to those who hear them."

Romans 15:13

"May the God of hope fill you with all joy and peace in believing, so that by the power of the Holy Spirit you may abound in hope."

Jeremiah 29:11

"'For I know the plans I have for you,' declares the Lord, 'plans to prosper you and not to harm you, plans to give you hope and a future.'"

Matthew 6:34

"Therefore do not worry about tomorrow, for tomorrow will worry about itself. Each day has enough trouble of its own."

James 1:2-4

"Consider it pure joy, my brothers and sisters, whenever you face trials of many kinds, because you know that the testing of your faith produces **perseverance**. Let



perseverance finish its work so that you may be mature and complete, not lacking anything."

Nahum 1:7

"The LORD is good, a refuge in times of trouble. He cares for those who trust in him."

Ezra 10:4

"Rise up; this matter is in your hands. We will support you, so take courage and do it."

Psalm 34:18

"The LORD is close to the brokenhearted and saves those who are crushed in spirit."

Bible Verses for Teens to Encourage Themselves

The Bible also has many verses that are motivational or inspirational, reminding readers that God is always with them. These passages are helpful to remember whenever you find yourself experiencing doubt or uncertainty.

Deuteronomy 31:6

"Be strong and courageous, do not be afraid or tremble at them, for the LORD your God is the one who goes with you. He will not fail you or forsake you."

Psalm 23:4

"Even though I walk through the darkest valley, I will fear no evil, for you are with me; your rod and your staff, they comfort me."

Psalm 34:10

"Those who seek the LORD lack no good thing."

Psalm 55:22

"Cast your cares on the LORD and he will sustain you; he will never let the righteous be shaken."

Isaiah 41:10

"Do not fear, for I am with you; Do not anxiously look about you, for I am your God. I will strengthen you, surely I will help you, Surely I will uphold you with My righteous right hand."



Isaiah 49:13

"Shout for joy, you heavens; rejoice, you earth; burst into song, you mountains! For the LORD comforts his people and will have compassion on his afflicted ones."

Zephaniah 3:17

"The LORD your God is with you, the Mighty Warrior who saves. He will take great delight in you; in his love he will no longer rebuke you, but will rejoice over you with singing."

Matthew 11:28-30

"If you are tired from carrying heavy burdens, come to me and I will give you rest. Take the yoke I give you. Put it on your shoulders and learn from me. I am gentle and humble, and you will find rest. This yoke is easy to bear, and this burden is light."

John 14:1-4

"Don't let your hearts be troubled. Trust in God, and trust also in me. There is more than enough room in my Father's home. If this were not so, would I have told you that I am going to prepare a place for you? When everything is ready, I will come and get you, so that you will always be with me where I am. And you know the way to where I am going."

Isaiah 40:31

"Those who hope in the LORD will renew their strength. They will soar on wings like eagles; they will run and not grow weary, they will walk and not be faint."

1 Corinthians 10:13

"The temptations in your life are no different from what others experience. And God is faithful. He will not allow the temptation to be more than you can stand. When you are tempted, he will show you a way out so that you can endure."

2 Corinthians 4:16-18

"Therefore we do not lose heart. Though outwardly we are wasting away, yet inwardly we are being renewed day by day. For our light and momentary troubles are achieving for us an eternal glory that far outweighs them all. So we fix our eyes not on what is seen, but on what is unseen, since what is seen is temporary, but what is unseen is eternal."

Philippians 4:6-7



"Do not be anxious about anything, but in every situation, by prayer and petition, with thanksgiving, present your requests to God. And the peace of God, which transcends all understanding, will guard your hearts and your minds in Christ Jesus."

Philippians 4:13

"I can do all this through him who gives me strength."

Joshua 1:9

"Be strong and courageous. Do not be afraid; do not be discouraged, for the LORD your God will be with you wherever you go."

BEN STEVE! DO NOT CRY.

